

The background of the cover is a rich, textured oil painting. It depicts an elderly man with a weathered face, wearing a light-colored straw hat, a dark grey suit jacket, a brown vest, and a white shirt with a dark bow tie. He is seated in a wooden chair with a red leather backrest. The wall behind him is covered in intricate, golden-brown carvings of various figures and motifs. To the right, a small, dark-framed picture hangs on the wall, showing a scene with several figures. Above the picture, a brass sconce with a single candle is visible. The overall color palette is dominated by warm, earthy tones like gold, brown, and red, with some cooler tones in the man's clothing.

REVIVAL

MEMORIES, IDENTITIES, UTOPIAS

EDITED BY
AYLA LEPINE
MATT LODDER
ROSALIND MCKEVER

Revival. Memories, Identities, Utopias

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Designed by Jack Hartnell

Cover Image:

Henri De Braekeleer, *The Man in the Chair*, 1876 (detail).
Oil on canvas, 79 x 63 cm, Koninklijk Museum voor
Schone Kunsten, Antwerp.

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CHAPTER 8

ARMENIAN ARCHITECTS
AND 'OTHER' REVIVALISM

ALYSON WHARTON



Nineteenth and early-twentieth century architecture was dominated by the 'battle of the styles'.¹ Styles were determined by their ornament: John Ruskin wrote ornament 'is the principal part of architecture' and the Gothic was chosen by George Gilbert Scott because of its principle 'to decorate construction'.² Modernists such as Nikolaus Pevsner saw this as a negative development, he described works as: 'crude, vulgar and overloaded with ornament'.³ Recent studies have been more positive, drawing attention to revivalism as an exploration of the way that architecture conveys meaning and how Romantic Rationalists like Henri Labrouste and Léon Vaudoyer 'understood polychromy as a clothing of a structural skeleton with objects, inscriptions, and scenes communicating the building's social function and history'.⁴ Revivalism in non-western contexts continues to be described as the importation of western modes: in the Ottoman Empire 'architectural pluralism' and 'orientalist' styles.⁵ The complexity of the experience that lay behind this revivalism and its local meaning has been ignored. This essay looks to Armenian architects who participated in revivalism, refashioning it to Constantinople, the Diaspora or Soviet Yerevan. It puts forward the notion that their revivalism was the reflection of two factors. First, they were exposed to a European education which gave them practical and intellectual tools. Second, they were part of cosmopolitan networks that extended from the Empire to Europe, through which ideas were circulated.

8.1
Entrance façade, Kara-
pet and Nigoğos Balyan,
Dolmabahçe Palace,
Istanbul, Turkey, 1856.

The architects that are the focus of this study: Nigoğos and Serkis Balyan, Léon Nafilyan, and Léon Gurekian, although all born in Constantinople, worked in different times and settings. The Balyan family were architects to the sultans in the nineteenth century. Nafilyan spent most of his working life in the 1920s and 30s in Paris. Gurekian moved to Italy in the early twentieth century. Despite disparate environments, these architects developed revivalism using similar methods and approaches. Their styles referenced historical models that depended on their setting, but were united in their syncretic nature. The persistence of this approach, uniting architects across time, stands in contrast to national styles, whose development has been emphasized. Instead the methodology of these architects reflects their attachment to cosmopolitan networks, despite rising national affiliations.

Circulation of foreign peoples and objects led to openness to others and other cultures.⁶ This movement of foreign nonhumans and humans converged to create a transnational public.⁷ Cosmopolitanism was a mindset, enabling people to think past their identities and activities and to cross boundaries to participate in those of others.⁸ It was an antidote to Nationalism because it did not view identity as defined by national borders.⁹

Movements of people and things between Europe and Constantinople were documented by the foreign language press, which mentions arrivals of Europeans to the city and travel of Ottomans to Europe.¹⁰ Advertisements sold European goods, announced theatre performances and publicised learned societies. Constantinople was, by mid century, a cosmopolitan world of shops, cafes, intellectuals, expansion of the printing press, artists and salons, with an expanded European presence.¹¹ Armenian architects were amongst the most mobile figures in society: the Balyans supported the theatre, travelled to Europe, and received guests such as Russian painter Ivan Ayvazovsky.¹²

The cosmopolitanism of these architects was cemented by their stays in Europe. Connections to European networks, techniques and ideas that they developed were then used in their architecture, for instance the importation of foreign goods and peoples organized for Dolmabahçe Palace (1856), the team for which was described as a 'Babel's Tower'.¹³

Openness to foreign people and things was accompanied by impenetrability. The Balyan family and Léon Nafilyan worked alongside Armenian assistants. The Balyans employed mainly local Armenian craftsmen and suppliers. Private architects such as Nafilyan received commissions from majority Armenian patrons.¹⁴

Nafilyan and Gurekian turned to Armenian subjects in works from the early twentieth century. Instead of showing the inevitable rise of Nationalism shattering the cosmopolitan ideal, this essay argues that these Armenian references were a continuation of the pragmatic approach, refashioning European methodology to social settings and patron's wishes.

Revivalism in architecture had two types. The first was 'Pluralism', which incorporated eclectic references.¹⁵ Pluralism was disparaged by theorists such as Eugène Viollet-le-

Duc, who complained about 'superficially adopting certain forms without analysing them or recurring to their causes'.¹⁶ A.W.N. Pugin expressed related views stating:

We have Swiss cottages in a flat country; Italian villas in the coldest situations; a Turkish kremlin for a royal residence...It is hardly possible to conceive that a person, who had made the art of Architecture the least part of their study, could have committed such enormities.¹⁷

Viollet-le-Duc advocated the 'spirit of method', including study of historic architecture and its principles; he upheld the Gothic as his ideal.¹⁸ He linked the Gothic with the French nation: the land of Descartes, scientific and engineering discoveries.¹⁹ His 'national specificity in architecture' was influenced by the racist theories of Comte Arthur Gobineau.²⁰ In Britain, Pugin also viewed the Gothic as endowed with religious and social meaning.²¹

Revivalist architecture became part of 'imagining the nation', or the process through which a community was made to feel bonds to a territory, as opposed to religious or dynastic leadership.²² This gave nations their own identity, fostered through traditions, museums, monuments and ceremonies.²³ The nation evolved out of modern, industrial society.²⁴ Nationalism began as an elite culture, spread by intellectuals and professionals.²⁵ It became a tool that was used by nation states. The invention of traditions was practiced by nations on a mass scale in the thirty years before the First World War; these were created in order to produce new forms of loyalty and obedience as well as defend the state's legitimacy.²⁶ Architecture was one tool used to foster national identity. In revivalism 'A single historical period—increasingly specific in its definition—was claimed to be the only one capable of providing models grounded in national traditions, institutions and values'.²⁷ This focus on the connection between architecture and nation-building remains strong for non-western geographies.

The Serbo-Byzantine movement originating from the 1840s has been read as detached from the preoccupations with aesthetics of European revivalism and mired in local political and social conditions and the desire to communicate national character.²⁸ The rise of a national style was a reaction against westernization.²⁹ This was led by intellectuals, such as archaeologist Mihailo Valtrovi, who carried out research on Serbian medieval architecture and argued that it expressed the spirit of the nation.³⁰ Building Byzantine-style churches in 1882–94 developed into a state-led policy, controlled by the Ministry for Building.³¹ The Byzantine style was tied to the golden age of Orthodoxy, with which the state wished to be associated.³²

A similar trajectory has been applied to the Ottoman Empire. Constantinople was flooded with European 'architectural pluralism', including an 'orientalist' style, which created 'a deep seated anxiety' among Turkish intellectuals and complaints were voiced in a text produced for the 1873 Vienna Exposition: *Usul-u Mimari-i Osmani* (The Rules of Ottoman Architecture).³³ Ottoman documents also complained of 'opening the way for a style that was neither Turkish, nor Arabic, nor Gothic'.³⁴ The *Usul* was the turning point

for the renewal of traditional architecture that followed. Intellectuals played the key role in producing this text, and subsequent styles were proto-national ones, conceived by Turkish architects.³⁵ Pre-1873 architecture, constructed by Armenians, was 'orientalist', 'pseudo-Islamic', and carried out by 'men of practice'.³⁶

Looking to the educational experiences of Armenian architects can correct this impression of the dominance of 'architectural pluralism' and 'orientalist' architecture followed by the rise of nationalism. Instead the cosmopolitan movement of these architects through styles shows how architecture was characterized by 'competing visions' despite political fragmentation.³⁷ These architects adopted European academic techniques for building and architectural communication. Chief amongst these was revivalism. However, this was not manipulated to express national identity through archaeologically—correct historicism. Instead, a syncretic revivalism was adapted to different settings.

The Balyan family controlled Ottoman imperial works since the turn of the century, and their monopoly grew under Karapet (1800–66). His sons, Nigoğos (1826–58) and Serkis (1831–99), were educated in Paris at the Collège Sainte-Barbe, Écoles des Beaux-Arts, and Serkis entered the École Centrale. Léon Nafilyan (1870–1937) came from the generation after the Balyans. He too attended the Sainte-Barbe and graduated from the Beaux-Arts in 1905. After this he worked as a private architect in Constantinople, then Egypt and from 1917 in Paris. His works include Armenian churches, apartment blocks and institutional buildings.³⁸

Léon Gurekian (1871–1950) had links not to France but to Italy; after attending the Mekhitarist (an Armenian Catholic Order) college in Venice, he was trained in Rome at the Institute of Fine Arts in 1889, graduating from the Royal School of Engineers in 1895. He left Constantinople for Bulgaria, where he lived between 1896 and 1898, and then moved back to Constantinople, finally resettling in Italy in 1907.³⁹ Gurekian's commissions include theatres, residences, Armenian churches, tombs and an exposition pavilion.⁴⁰

These Armenians shared characteristics that defined their approach to architecture. They were born in Constantinople in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Within this milieu, they came from wealthy Armenian families: Nafilyan's father was doctor to Abdülhamid II, and Gurekian had connections to the Catholic Church hierarchy.⁴¹

A second shared characteristic is their intellectual engagement. Many of them had political involvements. Nigoğos Balyan formed the Young Armenians (or Ararat Society) in Paris with Krikor Odian and Nahapet Rusinian, who wrote the 1863 Armenian constitution. Serkis was linked to the Armenian revolutionary Hunchak Party. Gurekian worked as a journalist in Constantinople and was politically active in the Diaspora.⁴²

Several of these architects were involved in the study of historical architecture. Agop Balyan toured Venice and Karapet travelled to the medieval Armenian city of Ani. A younger member of the family, Garo, wrote an architectural history.⁴³ Between 1910 and 1913 Gurekian travelled around archaeological sites in Italy, with a focus on Byzantine and Romanesque works, producing notebooks of drawings with the intention of studying the influence of Armenian architecture on Romanesque.⁴⁴

Nafilyan's library shows his intellectual leanings.⁴⁵ It contained Orientalist tomes, including books on Arab, Persian, and Turkish architecture written by European authors such as Émile Prisse D'Avennes.⁴⁶ Another preoccupation was with academic and archaeological study, as shown through the works of Charles Diehl and Ernest Renan, as well as formalists Rudolf Meyer Riefstahl and Josef Strzgowky. The work of Ernest Sellière on the Comte de Gobineau and historic Aryanism, alongside the multi-volume world history, UNIVERS' *Histoire de Description de Tous Les Peuples* of 1835–60 (published in Paris, by F. Didot frères), show his interest in anthropology. This intellectual engagement shows how new ideas were circulating within this class about politics (liberalism and separatism), about archaeology (the theories of the Romanesque), anthropology and orientalism, as well as their application to art and architectural practice. The leanings of this elite were transformed by their education in Paris.

The Collège Sainte-Barbe was a private school in Paris; Nigoğos and Serkis Balyan attended in the 1840s.⁴⁷ During this time, the school was reformed by its director Alexandre Labrousse.⁴⁸ It focused on professional preparatory classes for pupils who wished to attend governmental schools and became a popular location for Ottoman elites.⁴⁹

The *École Préparatoire* was governed by 'the force of the scientific education', led by Labrousse and Alphonse Blanchet. Teachers were members of the Institut de France and the Polytechnique. Serkis was exposed to key elements of this scientific education; he attended the prep class for students intending to go to the Centrale, which centred on elementary mathematics (and descriptive geometry). There were also classes that gave a humanistic education: French composition, Latin translation, history, geography, German and English, and drawing.⁵⁰

Of central importance was the drawing course. It followed the 'cours de dessin' rooted in copying antique sculptures and old master drawings and life drawing but also included architectural structures.⁵¹ Drawing teachers during Serkis' attendance included painter Jules Ernest Panis who was teacher of Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot and friend of Tournachon Nadar (photographer to the Impressionists and Romantics), as well as student of painter Henri Lehman (student of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres and teacher of Georges Seurat and Camille Pissarro).⁵²

Exposure to elite networks was a well known trait of the Sainte-Barbe: the Labrousse brothers met Léon Vaudoyer there, whose father (A-L-T Vaudoyer)'s atelier they joined and who gave them their recommendation to the Beaux-Arts.⁵³ Armenian-Ottomans at Sainte-Barbe included intellectuals such as Istepan Oskanyan, and diplomat Artin Dadyan.⁵⁴ In the same year as Serkis there was a Labrousse, and in 1850–1, Gustave Eiffel.⁵⁵ The guardians of Léon (the son of Nigoğos) included M. Donon (a relative of Théophile Gautier).⁵⁶

Exposure to the milieu of Sainte-Barbe meant some degree of contact with a key figure of Romantic architecture: Henri Labrousse (1801–75).⁵⁷ Armenian sources indicate that



Nigoğos Balyan had found favour with the Labroustes. One states: 'Baron Labrouste, the Head Master of the school, with great pride, remembers until today, his best-loved student'.⁵⁸ Others record Nigoğos travelling to Paris to learn architecture 'by attending the classes of the French architect Baron Labrouste, who was the director of the Imperial School of Fine Arts'.⁵⁹

An obituary of Nigoğos written by his best friend Krikor Odian hints at the influence of the Labroustes on an intellectual level. It states that Nigoğos was a follower of 'the architectural school of revival/renaissance' and that he created in his works 'a very clear horizon where his beautiful imagination could fly freely'.⁶⁰ Odian adds that this was a freedom based on Rationalism and the philosophy of Descartes, which was imported into literature by Victor Hugo.⁶¹

The influence of Sainte-Barbe and the romanticism of the 1840s can be recognized in Nigoğos' works, such as Dolmabahçe Palace of 1856 (fig. 8.1) in Constantinople, which was built for Sultan Abdülmecid. Nigoğos applied heavy carved ornament (neo-Renaissance, neo-Classical, neo-Baroque and Empire-style) to the regularized façade of this work in order to communicate the plenty of the Ottoman Empire under the reign of this reforming sultan—his imagination flying free on that clear horizon. However, Nigoğos' use of ornament was allied with a traditional Ottoman structure: the *sofa* plan of residential architecture.⁶² Moreover, the ornament was gathered under the sultan's *tuğra*, his imperial monogram (fig. 8.2), signifying his sovereignty over these riches, according to Ottoman traditions for displaying power.

8.2
Gate with Sultan's
Tuğra (Monogram),
Karapet and Nigoğos
Balyan, Dolmabahçe
Palace, Istanbul,
Turkey, 1856.

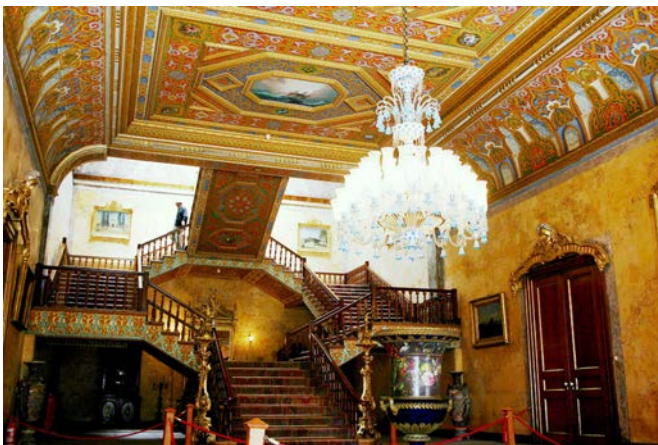
For Léon Nafilyan, who attended Sainte-Barbe from 1898, the school provided an important arena for entry into the Beaux-Arts. Networks had already played a part in his attendance. He was recommended by connections of his tutor at the school of St Gregory the Illuminator in Pera (Constantinople), Garabed Effendi Caracache with the publisher Charles Delagrave.⁶³ Nafilyan entered the Sainte-Barbe *École Préparatoire* in the section for students destined for the *École des Beaux-Arts* (and specifically the section for Architecture).⁶⁴ At the Sainte-Barbe he worked on his drawing technique, and was presented at the Beaux-Arts in 1899 by 'J. Gillet', head of the atelier.⁶⁵

The intellectual effects of the training of the *École des Beaux-Arts* are easier to determine, both for Serkis Balyan, who attended *Architectes Aspirants* as a student of Rebout (this could have been either Juls or Charles Mercier, the first name is not given) and *Construction Générale* under Louis-Jules André in the 1860s,⁶⁶ and for Nafilyan, who graduated with a diploma in 1905.⁶⁷ These two Armenians assimilated the educational approach to differing degrees. Serkis Balyan gained building technique from his experience at the *École Centrale* in 1850. Rebout's and André's courses at the Beaux-Arts both taught skills such as descriptive geometry and building in carpentry, masonry and metalwork. However the distinction of Beaux-Arts pedagogy was its formal emphasis on the design of ornament.⁶⁸

The backbone of the Beaux-Arts was the atelier system.⁶⁹ Students worked on drawing projects that were entered into *concours* or competitions. The Academy chose a subject (private architecture, public or religious), candidates would produce *esquisse* (sketches), and *projets rendus* (rendered projects), and these would be judged.⁷⁰ Competitions were intended to develop the 'grand art' of composition.⁷¹ The pinnacle was the Grand Prix de Rome, for which students created work that corresponded to 'des commandes théoriques de grande échelle' (i.e. ambassadorial residences, *palais d'exposition*, operas or museums).⁷²

Works by Serkis Balyan such as Beylerbeyi Palace (figs 8.3–8.5) built for Sultan Abdülaziz in 1864 reflect the attention to drawing projects that was an integral part of Beaux-Arts education. Following on from the ornamental coating of Dolmabahçe, Beylerbeyi Palace showed intricate attention to detail that had not been seen on Ottoman architecture, which had incorporated ornament to stress the structure and was determined by rules of decorum.⁷³ Instead the ornamental coating of the Parisian *renouveau décorative* can be seen.⁷⁴ Nurtured through ateliers and competitions, works such as Beylerbeyi Palace relied on ornament to win the attention of the public. This ornament communicated meanings through carved exterior surfaces and interiors with monumental paintings.⁷⁵ One key difference between Dolmabahçe and Beylerbeyi that reflects the Beaux-Arts experience (of the 1860s onwards) was a change from European-referencing ornament to a stress on medieval styles; Beylerbeyi included Moorish and Arab decoration.

In 1863–4 the Beaux-Arts *Cours Spéciaux* included theory of architecture taught by Leseueur, history of architecture taught by Lebas, and history and antiquities given by Heuzey. Amongst *Cours de L'Exercice* in 1864 was history of art taught by Viollet-le-Duc,



8.3
Entrance façade,
Serkis and Agop Balyan,
Beylerbeyi Palace,
Istanbul, Turkey, 1864.

8.4 and 8.5
Interior, Serkis
and Agop Balyan,
Beylerbeyi Palace,
Istanbul, Turkey, 1864.

and history and archaeology by Heuzezy.⁷⁶ This move away from classical orders towards historic styles was an important shift, which characterized teaching at the time of Balyan's enrolment.

Viollet-le-Duc's course on history of art and aesthetics stemmed from his belief in the importance of archaeological discoveries, which enabled architects to see 'the points which these styles have in common, [and] how they start from the same principles'.⁷⁷ This change was met with antagonism from teachers and students and he resigned.⁷⁸ Despite this, his ideas became influential and his presence cannot have failed to make an impression.

Lucien Magne, who was successor to Viollet-le-Duc, taught a course on 'modern architecture', which included Latin, Byzantine, Gothic, Renaissance, Monastic architecture and Arab architecture as well as of China, Mexico and Peru, showing the expansion into world styles.⁷⁹ These styles were viewed in an essentialist way: on Arab architecture, Magne's outline states that 'it is byzantine [in] origin, modified by the oriental imagination, characterised by the use of the trefoil arch'.⁸⁰

Beylerbeyi Palace, a summer palace on the Bosphorus constructed to coincide with the visit of Empress Eugenie in 1868, shows a reconfigured Ottoman identity under Abdülaziz, expressed through historical ornament. Interior rooms had painted walls in Arab and Moorish patterns, resembling designs by Owen Jones.⁸¹ These patterns, referencing a romantic Islamic golden age (of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates), took the place of the Renaissance, Baroque and Neoclassical references of Dolmabahçe. These patterns were accompanied by Ottoman calligraphic panels, which communicated a new Islamic emphasis: inscriptions referred to the just governance of the sultan as Caliph, and the sultan as protected and directed by God, some referred to victory and stated that the sultan 'enlightened the land like the sun'.⁸²

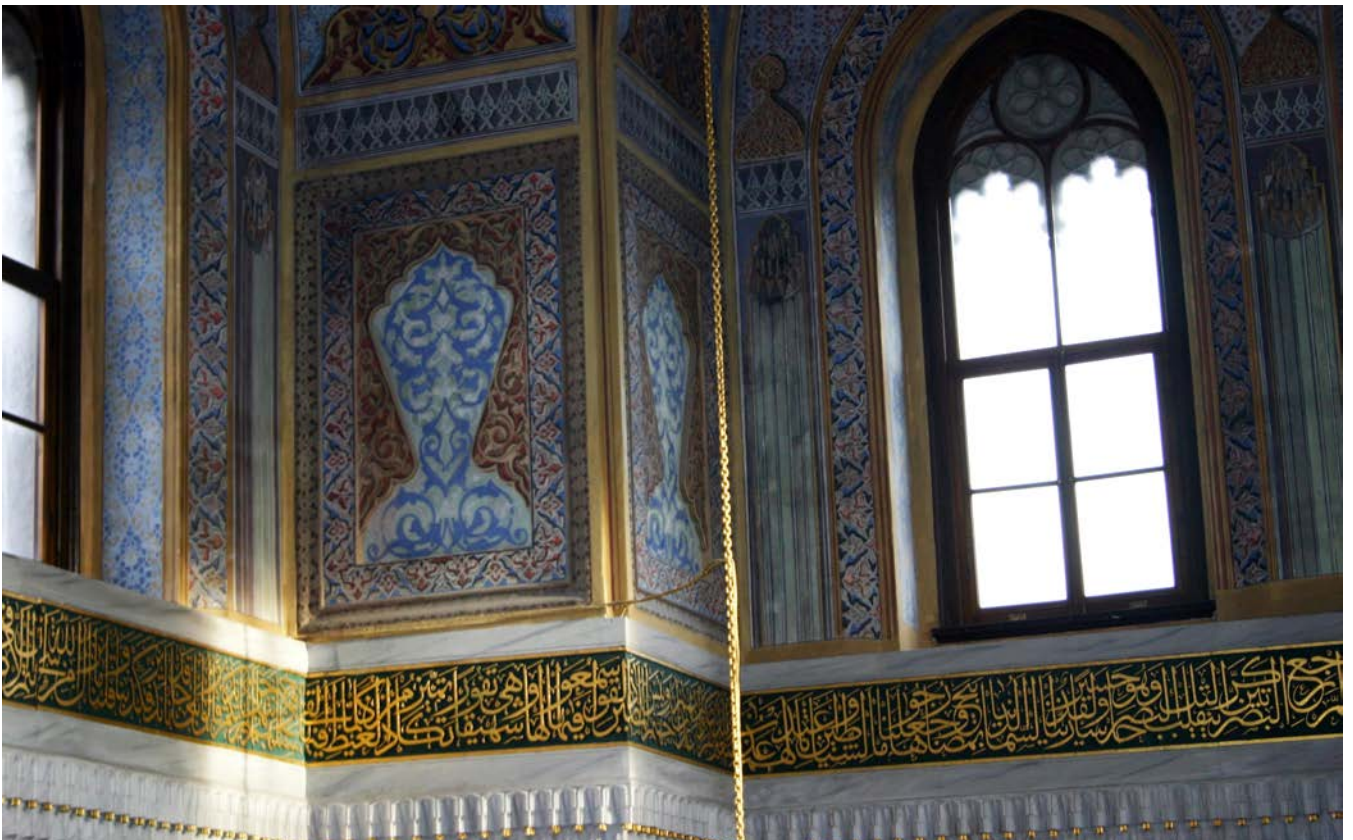
This was not an exclusively neo-Islamic vision: naval paintings by Polish painter Stanisław Chlebowski and Ayvazovsky adorned ceilings; river-side kiosks were picturesque; an Orangery occupied the garden alongside animal sculptures and a mounted statue of Abdülaziz;⁸³ an indoor fountain used cutting-edge engineering techniques; and the exterior façades of the palace followed Italian Renaissance models. Furthermore, as at Dolmabahçe, the Ottoman *sofâ* plan was used and the sultan's *tuğra* displayed his sovereign power.

The decoration seen in the works of Serkis Balyan for Abdülaziz, not only Beylerbeyi Palace but also Pertevniyal Valide Sultan Mosque of 1872 (figs 8.6–8.7) and Çırağan Palace of 1871 were an adaptation of the approach to 'other' historic styles taught at the Beaux-Arts. These buildings incorporated references to varied Islamic styles in one building: Moorish, Arab, Mughal, Seljuk and Ottoman. Islamic modes were used alongside Gothic and European, showing the confluence of traditions. The meaning of this ornament, although related to the thought of Magne and Viollet-le-Duc, reflected notions circulated in Constantinople.



8.6
Exterior, Serkis
and Agop Balyan,
Pertevniyal Valide
Sultan Mosque,
Istanbul, Turkey, 1872.

8.7
Interior, Serkis
and Agop Balyan,
Pertevniyal Valide
Sultan Mosque,
Istanbul, 1872.



A text written by French architect-decorator Léon Parvillée—who worked on repairs to the first Ottoman capital of Bursa, contributed to the Ottoman delegations to universal expositions and to projects of the Balyan family such as Dolmabahçe Palace—sheds light on local perceptions of architecture.⁸⁴ Parvillée was a disciple of Viollet-le-Duc, who wrote the preface to the book. In this, Viollet-le-Duc argued that 'l'art turc' was in continuity with Gothic and Crusader architecture,⁸⁵ and that there was a common source of Islamic and medieval European works. The style of 'l'art turc' adopted whatever was at its disposal and was a mixture of Arab, Persian, and 'Hindu'.⁸⁶ Parvillée himself wrote that Ottoman Architecture was representative of 'mêlée aux conquérants' and the Green Mosque of Bursa was proof that Sultan Mehmed I was deserving of the title 'le gentilhomme' because Bursa resembled the pluralistic conditions of the present-day empire.⁸⁷

Sopon Bezirdjian (1841–1915), who worked as a decorator on palaces of the Balyans, published an album of oriental designs in 1889 that further elucidates local meanings of styles.⁸⁸ He notes of the passion of Abdülaziz for palaces in 'true Oriental style' and his love for Turkish, Persian and Arabian styles. But, at the same time, Bezirdjian encourages an academic approach to Oriental Art. Bezirdjian's views are both a participation in and reaction against the inaccurate representations of the Europeans. He writes that he became aware 'during my experience in Europe' that 'when we desire to have a thorough knowledge of a nation, past or present...it is of the utmost importance...to closely examine with unprejudiced wide open eyes, and to have some familiar intercourse with the natives themselves...'.⁸⁹

The development of an Ottoman revivalist style was fostered through international expositions of the 1860s and 70s. The Ottoman pavilion for the Torino Exposition of 1911 built by Léon Gurekian shows a neo-Ottoman mode.⁹⁰ However, it does not resemble any one Ottoman building but instead, like Parvillée's Pavillon du Bosphore for the Paris 1867 exposition, it combines features from Ottoman works in a new way.⁹¹ The eaves are reminiscent of the pavilions of the Topkapı Palace but they crown a two-storied edifice, raised on steps; the crenulations, *mihrab*s (prayer niches) and cartouches with arabesque decoration were all seen on interior decoration but here they are on the exterior. The plan of the pavilion, in common with Parvillée's and Balyan works, follows the *sofa*. Traditional elements are revived through their unusual placement and combination with non-Ottoman elements.

Despite their eclectic approach, the architects of these pavilions sought authenticity. Parvillée aimed to mimic Ottoman architecture in his 1867 pavilion, which included a mosque and a *hamam* and was based on fieldwork in Bursa.⁹² In the setting of the international expositions, the Ottoman Empire trumpeted its Islamic heritage and local traditions: Selaheddin Bey in 1867 likened Abdülaziz's visit to the exposition to Harun al-Rashid sending presents to the 'greatest monarch of the Occident'. The 1873 delegation to the Vienna Exposition included books on Ottoman costumes and architecture, promoting



local goods and indigenous traditions.⁹³ Yet, at the same time, participation in these expositions was a bid to 'present a respectable profile' and a 'civilised profile' on the international stage.⁹⁴ The pavilion by Gurekian corresponds to a codification of the 'Oriental' (Ottoman-Islamic) and 'modern' through revivalism.

In private commissions, Gurekian built in a range of styles: a Mannerist Church, Neo-Ottoman *yalı* (seaside residence), Swiss chalet villa, Empire-style guardhouse, Renaissance palazzo, and Art Nouveau apartment block, to name a few examples. Style was likely to reflect the demands of patrons; Armenian works could be in a Neo-Armenian style, for example the Aidinian funerary chapel, but they could also be eclectic, as seen in the Yeranuhi Kütçeyan (Keutcheyan) family tomb.

Nafilyan's works also show a confusing degree of variety. Many have a sparse Art Deco aesthetic, such as 21–25 Rue Rayonard, Paris, built 1931–4, and the Coutzi brothers' apartment in Damascus in 1937. Works that exhibit more ornament include Maison Passega on rue de Lisbonne, Paris. Nafilyan built a number of works in an Armenian historicist style. For the funerary chapel of the Kanjounzeff in Père Lachaise of 1923 (fig. 8.8) and the Church of Gregory the Illuminator in Heliopolis, Cairo (1924–7), this style, harking back to medieval Armenian models, was chosen. The Heliopolis Church implemented features of the Mother Church at Etchmiadzin, including the conical dome and distinctive bell tower. The domed hexagon of the Kanjounzeff funerary chapel incorporated medieval Armenian decorative details such as the blind arcading of Ani Cathedral and frieze of grapes from Zvartnots.

Maison Arménienne, of 1928–34, (fig. 8.9), built with the patronage of Boğos Nubar Pasha (1851–1930) also made reference to medieval Armenian churches. The carved stone provided parallels with the blind arcading of Ani, animals in roundels adorn a frieze similar to Akhtamar Holy Cross Church, and the stepped motif from Noravank can be seen.

The Armenian historicism of Nafilyan reflects two different circumstances: first, the building's function and context and second, his Beaux-Arts education. Regarding the former, the *maison* was built to encourage the growth of an Armenian intellectual class in France following the Genocide of 1915 and the Soviet Occupation of Armenia in 1920. Study of Armenian culture expanded due to excavations at Ani beginning in 1892 and Zvartnots from 1905. There was a growth in cataloguing Armenian buildings; Armenian architect Toros Toramanian asserted that Armenian architecture looked to the prototype

8.8
Exterior, Léon Nafilyan,
Kanjounzeff Funerary
Chapel, Père Lachaise
Cemetery, Paris, France,
1923.

8.9
Exterior, Léon Nafilyan,
Maison Arménienne,
Cité Universitaire,
Paris, France, 1928–34.

of Etchmiadzin and its distinctive dome, whereas Josef Strzygowski argued that it was an Aryan style of Persian descent and the Armenian Urform.⁹⁵

Nafilyan's choice of a historicist style looking back to the golden age of Armenian architecture should be seen in these contexts. However, his use of the domed basilica, a form despised by Strzygowski as a Mediterranean influence, indicates that he did not blindly follow the Urform.⁹⁶ Indeed, his library did not contain the work of Strzygowski, nor other books on Armenian architecture.

Instead Nafilyan's *maison* shows a syncretic approach to historical references. Tall façades with casement windows give the *maison* the regularized appearance of Beaux-Arts planning, but these windows are placed within Armenian blind arcading, which would, in medieval works, be filled with slit openings. As in the chapel and Cairo church, details of the carved decoration refer to medieval Armenian works, but, alongside these are Art Nouveau elements, such as the typeface (seen too in the Kanjounzeff chapel) of Guimard.

Turning to the role of Nafilyan's Beaux-Arts education in determining his historicism, Nafilyan graduated with a diploma in architecture in 1905 and he was thus exposed to a detailed technical education, drawing courses, projects, learning about the history of architecture and he competed in the *concours*.⁹⁷ Two of Nafilyan's projects were a French ambassadorial residence in a foreign country, and a colonial museum, showing how he had gained experience in making compositions to express identities.⁹⁸ Nafilyan was able to manipulate Beaux-Arts planning and use of historical ornament to convey meaning in *Maison Arménienne*, but he did not express a bombastic nationalistic identity, rather a romantic evocation of a lost age.

In contrast with the syncretic approach to revivalism of the Balyans, Gurekian and Nafilyan was the architecture of Soviet Yerevan by Alexandre Tamanyan (1878–1936). Tamanyan's works were, like the *Maison Arménienne*, built in a style making reference to medieval Armenian monuments like Ani and Akhtamar, but in Yerevan these were on a monumental scale that created 'a cult of patrimonial historicism'.⁹⁹ The difference in approach is highlighted by Nafilyan's sole work in Yerevan: his ophthalmology clinic built in 1930 with the patronage of Nubar Pasha (fig. 8.10). Set back from Abovyan Street, Nafilyan's clinic is modest and ornamented with small details such as Art Deco geometric window surrounds, traces of rustication and a central pediment. Sadly, the few remaining pre-Tamanyan works are being destroyed in Yerevan to make room for a new round of bombastic neo-Armenian creations, this time financed by US diasporans.

This essay has shown how Armenian architects born in Constantinople and educated in Europe adapted revivalist styles over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were skilled draughtsmen, polymaths who amassed libraries and carried out fieldwork in order to deepen knowledge of their craft and its academic underpinnings. However, they refashioned what they had learnt in Europe to their contexts: whether in Dolmabahçe Palace heralding the age of plenty of Abdülmecid, in Beylerbeyi Palace repo-



sitioning Abdülaziz as a ruler with rich Islamic genealogy, in the Torino pavilion asserting the value of Ottoman traditions, or in the Maison Arménienne connecting intellectuals of the Diaspora with the golden age of Armenian architecture.

This creation of architecture that spoke meaning was not commandeered into communicating a monolithic political message. Although many of these architects were politically engaged, they did not manipulate revivalism in the service of Nationalism. Even the more explicitly 'Armenian' works, such as the Maison Arménienne of Nafilyan, or the Villa Ararat of Gurekian, can be regarded not as a rally cry but as a picturesque recalling of a lost ideal.

8.10
Exterior, Léon Nafilyan,
Ophthalmology Clinic,
Yerevan, Armenia,
1930.

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